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ABSTRACT

This report is the outcome of the first attempt to research self-help groups (SHGs) systematically on a large enough scale to represent the whole of those in Great Britain. Chapter 1 explains and defines what SHGs are and how they relate, qualitatively and quantitatively, to the universe of all voluntary organizations of which they are a part. Chapter 2 describes their organization and relationship to various kinds of umbrella organizations. Chapter 3 presents the survey's main descriptive findings about groups in all their variety, their members, and their work. Chapter 4 develops factual findings further by relating them to each other and other factors to investigate the complexities of motivation, objectives, and benefits. Because SHGs exist to help people who suffer from some problem, damage, or exclusion and their confidence must be respected, evidence is not illustrated with much individual detail. However, chapter 5 does describe what happens in SHG meetings and adds descriptive text drawn from intensive case studies of eight groups representing different kinds of SHGs. Chapter 6 draws on survey findings and case studies to address training needs, practice, and problems. Chapter 7 relates findings to the community at large. Chapter 8 reflects upon the findings in general and draws some conclusions. Appendixes include 15 references and details of the survey, sample, and methods. (YLB)

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